

EUGENICS IN THE LIGHT OF POPULATION TRENDS*

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ONE day someone will write a history of the eugenic movement. The historian will have some puzzles to solve. How did it come about that the subject was ventilated as early as the 'sixties of the last century though no real knowledge of the mechanism of inheritance was available until the early years of the present century? That we may attribute mainly to the genius of one man. Sir Francis Galton foresaw the importance of applying our knowledge of heredity to social problems; at the same time he did not fail to realize that the knowledge available in his day was very limited. Indeed he devoted much of his time and energy to the building up of a science of inheritance. But it is not the case that his followers have always been equally impressed with the necessity of postponing the formulation of policy until the relevant facts are certainly known, and of this opportunity for criticism the opponents of the movement have not been slow to take advantage.

THE QUESTION OF NUMBERS

Our historian will also note and feel called upon to explain the lack of interest shown by eugenists in the quantity aspect of the population problem. For it is a fact that eugenists have been little concerned with numbers. It is not difficult to understand why this should have been so in the first decades of the movement. The widespread interest in numbers, which the work of Malthus had aroused, began to flag after the middle of the century. When Sir Francis Galton wrote it had withered away. In their neglect of this matter, therefore, eugenists were like others of their day. But it may be urged that there is an aspect of the question of numbers that is of permanent interest to eugenists, though it may not appear to touch any immediate

or urgent problem. As Sir Josiah Stamp pointed out in his Galton lecture of last year, it is by no means certain that the economic optimum density coincides with the eugenic optimum density; and this point deserves more attention by eugenists than it has received. Again it may be urged that, unless there is an interest in the quantity problem, it may be difficult to understand some aspects of the quality problem. For an investigation of the former involves a review of all the forces bearing upon a population, and in the absence of such a review it may be difficult to interpret correctly the forces lying behind those particular phenomena which attract the attention of eugenists, for example, the forces producing differential fertility. But however that may be, I hope presently to show that there are now other and more pressing reasons why eugenists should no longer neglect the question of numbers.

NEED FOR POSITIVE EUGENICS

The concentration upon what is usually called negative eugenics is another fact which our historian will note. To some extent this is connected with the lack of interest in quantity. No one ever thinks of negative eugenics as likely to have any noteworthy effect upon numbers, whereas the question of numbers is at once brought to the fore by any programme for positive eugenics. But the concentration upon negative eugenics is mostly due to the fact that it has seemed hitherto to be both more urgent and more practicable to restrain the unpromising than to encourage the promising. And so far as urgency is concerned, this was true during the earlier decades of the eugenic movement. But it has always seemed to me premature to hold any view about the possibilities of positive eugenics; and throughout this paper I mean by positive eugenics, not an

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attempt to breed a race of supermen, but to raise the fertility of those who are not definitely subnormal until at least they replace themselves.

No such effort has yet been made, and in the absence of evidence we can only speculate; and I shall presently point out that those speculations which lead to pessimistic conclusions omit some very important considerations. Leaving that aside for the present, it is, I think, a fact worthy of note that the concentration upon negative eugenics has had unfortunate consequences. The outlook and activities of eugenists have seemed to be repressive rather than creative. There has been little place for generous constructive enthusiasm within the movement. Eugenists have appeared to find much to censor but little to praise. In consequence the public has come to attribute to eugenists a disposition to scold and to prophesy disaster. There is a well-known charitable society with a long record of most useful achievement to its credit. It has, however, made a strong point of the importance of discriminating between applicants for help. This has aroused criticism; a critic once called it *The Society for the Detection of the Undeserving Poor*. Would not one of the numerous critics of our *Society* have summed up the impression which concentration upon negative eugenics inevitably makes upon the public mind, if he had adapted the jibe, and called our *Society* *The Society for the Detection of Persons Undeserving of Posterity*?

My thesis to-night is that in the field of population changes are in progress which will require eugenists to take an interest in numbers, and which will offer an opportunity for a policy of positive eugenics, thereby opening the way for a more creative kind of activity and a more generally attractive programme. These changes are no doubt fairly familiar to you. But I must go over the matter, though in very brief outline, because it is only by so doing that I can place before you the reasons for my belief that positive eugenics will be urgently demanded by the new situation, whereas the need for pursuing a policy of negative eugenics will become less pressing.

THE PREVALENCE OF SMALL FAMILIES

The changes to which I have referred originated neither in a decline of the frequency of marriage nor in a diminution of the proportion of women of child-bearing age in the population, but in a decline in the size of the family. In order to draw out the significance of this fact we must probe a little way into its causes. The smaller family is due in the main to a decrease in the fertility of married women in each age group. In other words the only factor of major importance in producing these changes is that the chance has greatly diminished that a married woman of given age, say thirty, will bear a child within a year. Thus far there is no difference of opinion. But when we ask why the fertility of married women has decreased, somewhat divergent views are expressed. While some consider that birth-control is the only factor, others believe that additional influences are at work. But no one has proved that any factor other than birth-control is in operation, and there does not seem to be any aspect of the decline in fertility which indicates that such a factor exists though it has not been identified. If, for instance, it had been proved that involuntary sterile marriages were on the increase, the presence of some additional factor would clearly be indicated. But this has not been demonstrated. Further in my opinion there is no aspect of the decline of fertility that cannot be interpreted with comparative ease as due to birth-control. Thus I accept the view that birth-control is the only important cause, if not the only cause, of the decline in the fertility of married women of given age, and therefore also the chief cause of the decline in the size of the family.

The decline in the size of the family has reached a point that is not apparent at first sight. This can be illustrated in various ways. We may use the method evolved by Mr. Kuczynski which consists essentially in assessing the present forces of birth and death. If that is done for this country, it is found that we are not only not replacing ourselves, but are between 25 and 30 per cent. below replacement rate. In other words, if the forces of birth and death, as they now are

country, were to play upon a population stabilized age grouping, the population would decrease by between 25 and 30 per cent. in thirty years.

We may illustrate the position by using figures for the population at some future date. When doing so, there are roughly two methods of procedure that can be adopted. One is to present figures of purely theoretical calculations, such as Sauvy gave for France when he showed what the future population of France would amount to if the birth-rate for the whole of France was at once reduced to the level now prevailing in Paris. The other is to attempt to discern the most probable rates of births and deaths and to give figures upon the assumptions so arrived at. The most useful method of illustrating the present position of this country so far as the immediate purpose is concerned. I may therefore select this course.

ESTIMATING FUTURE POPULATION

The statistical procedure involved is simple but laborious. We begin with the present population divided into age and sex groups. Then we add the births and subtract the deaths that we estimate as likely to occur between now and the future date for which a calculation is required. It is in connection with estimating the number of future births and deaths that difficulties occur. But in connection with future deaths the difficulties are not serious. We can take it that everyone will continue to live as long as they can; we can estimate exactly what scope there is for a change in the death-rate during the childhood period, the only period during which a change in the death-rate will affect the size of population; and we know a good deal about the chances of decreasing the death-rate in this period. Thus there are no serious differences of opinion about the number of deaths that are likely to occur at any time in the near future.

When we pass to the question of future births it is different. We do not know how the future will come to regard marriage and size of family; we do not know what their attitude towards birth-control will be. The most probable procedure is perhaps to assume

that the recent decline in fertility will continue at least for a time, and to estimate future births upon that basis. Then we may examine the implications of this assumption with the object of throwing some light on its probability. Thus, for example, if we project the present downward trend of fertility into the future, in such manner that fertility stabilizes in 1944, it can be shown that the population of Great Britain will be rather over 41 millions in 1956 and about 32½ millions in 1976, that is a decline of 3½ millions by the former and of 12 millions by the latter date, migration movements being left out of account.

Let us examine the implication contained in this assumption that there will be some further decline in the average size of the family. The average family is much larger among the poorer than the richer classes in this country. We know the exact position in 1911, but owing to the deplorable failure to keep the information up to date on comparable lines we do not know how far there has been, during the last twenty years, a tendency towards equality between the classes in this respect. But from inquiries that have been made in Sweden, Germany and Holland, it emerges that there is movement towards a reduction in the fertility of the poorer classes to the level reached by the wealthier classes. An approximation to equality seems to have been reached in Stockholm. It cannot well be doubted that things are moving or will move in this direction in all Western countries. If equality comes about in this country at the present level of the more prosperous classes, the decline in the fertility of the whole population will be greater than was assumed in the calculation quoted above.

But existing methods of contraception are not very effective; if they were improved, the decline would be more rapid and probably, though not necessarily, ultimately greater. With these considerations in mind it would seem probable that the figures suggested for 1956 and 1976 will not be reached unless there is an increase in the size of family in sections of the population where it is already low. In other words, in order to

avoid a greater decline than this, the size of family among the less fertile must move up, as that of the more fertile moves down. It follows that the increase of size of family among the former must be still greater if the population is not to sink to the figures given. That there will be a movement downwards among the more fertile is almost certain; it is impossible to estimate the chances of an upward movement among the less fertile, but in my opinion it is not likely to come about in the absence of a policy directed to that end.

POPULATION TREND AND NEGATIVE EUGENICS

It is in the light of these considerations that I wish to discuss the eugenic movement, and in particular the policy of this *Society*. Let me first take negative eugenics, which at present occupies most of the attention of the movement. The situation for which a remedy is sought is the existence of persons with inadequate or unpromising mental or physical endowment. It is sometimes forgotten that a problem is created by the mere existence of such persons. The problem is aggravated, but not created, by the fact that in general such persons have families whose size is greater than the average for the whole population. The view is prevalent that this type of differential fertility is bound up with the differential class fertility of which I have spoken. Those who hold this view will therefore derive comfort from the changes which I have just described. For differential class fertility is likely to pass away, and, to the extent to which the two matters are in reality one, the difficulty will solve itself.

I cannot share this optimism. The view that there are innate differences between the classes rests upon two arguments. It is inferred that social mobility must result in the sorting out of innate characters and in the concentration of the more valuable characters in the prosperous classes. It is held that the result of applying intelligence tests shows that there is in fact a higher level of ability in these classes. It is impossible to enter upon any adequate discussion of the matter here. It must suffice to point out that,

even if the evidence of intelligence tests taken at its face value, it points to differences between the classes which are small compared with the very large differences which are known to exist within the classes. Within each class at one end of the scale there is material of the highest value and at the other end of the scale material which is poor to worthless. There is evidence that families are largest within the classes at the wrong end of the scale, and there is no reason to suppose, so far as I can see, that attainment of equality in respect of fertility between the classes, which is being brought about by the forces now at work, will involve equality within the classes. If that is so, the main problem of negative eugenics remains untouched by the population movement now in progress.

PRESENT-DAY EUGENICS POLICY

What are the prospects of solving it by the methods advocated by the *Society*? The *Society* relies upon three methods. In the first place it attempts to build up a eugenic conscience in the sense that it tries to spread more widely a feeling of responsibility concerning the bringing into the world of those who are inadequately endowed. But it is fully realized that this can achieve very little where most needs to be done. There are also certain dangers inherent in this propaganda to which I shall refer later. Secondly, the *Society* desires to see sterilization legalized and though the case for this step is overwhelming, the quantitative results, which may be expected, can be and frequently are very much exaggerated. Quite clearly the *Society* must rely in the main upon the third method—the spread of birth-control.

If what I said above is true it would seem at first sight that the prospects of achieving the desired end in this manner are unpromising. Birth-control is going to equalize the birth-rate between but not within the classes. But when speaking of birth-control I have had in mind existing methods; they are not very effective, and relative to the situation of many not very easy to employ, and relative to the resources of many not inexpensive. If they were improved, especially in the

direction of greater simplicity, the situation would change. The reason why the birth-rate is highest at the wrong end within the social classes is not so much absence of knowledge that the family can be limited or any aversion to doing so, but the fact that to people of little or no foresight the care and trouble immediately involved by present methods of limitation weigh more than the distant possibility of unwanted children. What is required is not so much propaganda in favour of existing methods of birth-control or indeed propaganda at all, but improved methods, coupled with better economic and social surroundings.

I do not wish to minimize the possible ultimate importance of voluntary sterilization. Dr. Blacker has recently given reasons for supposing that, if it was legalized, many whose qualifications to be numbered among the parents of the future are doubtful might in time submit to it. If these reasons are sound, as I am inclined to believe, it seems to me to follow that, given improved methods of contraception, these same people would limit their families readily in the near future; that is to say that, as between voluntary sterilization and improved contraceptive methods, there is much more to be anticipated from the latter than from the former. Therefore I welcome the recent decision of the *Society* to subsidize research into contraception as the most hopeful, indeed the only hopeful, way of dealing effectively in the near future with the situation which I have described and which constitutes the core of the problem of negative eugenics.

EUGENIC CONSEQUENCES OF POPULATION DECLINE

The *Society* is thus driven to rely in the field of negative eugenics upon a course of action which will improve and spread the practice which, even in its present form and extension, is going to bring about a heavy decline in population. I fail altogether to understand the complacency with which the situation is regarded by eugenists. There seems to be an idea among them that within bounds outside their immediate purview there

are considerations of a social and economic nature which make a decline not unwelcome. But this is not so. Excessive numbers, for instance, are not a cause of unemployment. To a sociologist there is something radically unhealthy about a situation where people are failing by so large a margin to replace themselves. And within the field of eugenics the situation is surely deplorable if the essence of eugenics is the perpetuation of the community from its more promising elements. The fertility of this section, and I am speaking not in terms of social classes but of endowment wherever found, is 50 per cent. below replacement rate.

It would be interesting to speculate, if there was time, on the reasons for this amazing complacency. It is due in part no doubt to the fact that the measures which are proposed for raising the birth-rate are thought to be incompatible with the policy to which the *Society* is already committed in its efforts to reduce the fertility of certain sections of the population. In my opinion it is a mistake to believe that this incompatibility exists; to this point I shall return later. Another fact impresses me. Eugenists are mostly drawn from the prosperous classes, and they want their children to find a secure place in these classes. But small though their families are, they find this increasingly difficult to bring about, and they attribute the trouble to excessive numbers. This is an erroneous diagnosis; the increased competition for the eligible posts is due to the extension of education and to the breakdown of the barriers which formerly reserved many eligible occupations to the more fortunately situated. Under modern conditions the difficulty cannot be escaped and has nothing at all to do with numbers.

The coming decline is as yet hidden from the people at large. Prophecy is dangerous; but it needs no courage to foretell that, once the decline in numbers becomes apparent, universal interest and concern will be aroused in the population problem. This problem may well assume first place among public questions, and put in the shade these economic and social matters which now occupy attention. Discussion will lead

ultimately to action, and this is the point to which I wish to draw special attention tonight. If eugenists set to work now and formulate a policy designed to lift the birth-rate, they will be first in the field. Under such circumstances their proposals will at least obtain sympathetic attention, and may well be adopted in whole or in part. Such proposals will possess the great merit of having been formulated with the problem of quality as well as the problem of quantity in mind. But if they delay, measures will be proposed by others who have quantity alone in mind, and the nation will get committed to a population policy in which eugenic considerations find no place. I would urge with all the force at my command that the *Society* has an opportunity which is never likely to recur. Everyone will soon be asking what can be done. A population policy will certainly be constructed; now is the time to ensure that it will be a policy in which eugenic considerations are not omitted.

THE ALLEGED RETREAT FROM PARENTHOOD

Before discussing what would be the content of a policy designed to raise the birth-rate eugenically, we must pick up the threads of the discussion of the origin of the present situation. I got as far as giving reasons for supposing that the immediate cause of the present situation is the increasing prevalence of contraception. But why do people employ contraception? The essence of the matter is simple. There has long been a latent desire for a smaller family. Queen Victoria, writing to the King of the Belgians in 1841, said: "I think, dearest Uncle, you cannot *really* wish me to be the 'Mamma d'une nombreuse famille,' for I think you will see with me the great inconvenience a *large* family would be to us all, and particularly to the country, independent of the hardship and inconvenience to myself; men, never think, at least seldom think, what a hard task it is for us women to go through this *very often*." The great place which the Queen held in the esteem of her people was due to the fact that she shared in so many ways the views of the mass of her subjects.

And in respect to size of family she was no exception. The desire for a small family was present. Early in the last century the means to limit the family were made known. Some decades passed before people in general became willing to employ these means, and it was not until the 'seventies that they became extensively used in this country.

The story is of course full of complexity which I do not wish to minimize. But it is not necessary for my purpose to probe further; I need only draw out two inferences from the chapter in the story which we have reached. Children were formerly the inevitable accompaniment of married companionship and home life. There was no question of any attitude to size of family; that settled itself. There was no thought of replacing the present generation; replacement was automatic. Children were a forced levy; they are now voluntary contributions. But though size of family is now a matter of deliberation, replacement as yet plays no part in those deliberations. To how many people does it ever occur to connect the size of their family with the future of their country? No such notion ever enters the head of the man in the street.

Voluntary contributions have, as we all know, to be earnestly solicited; but for these essential contributions there is as yet no solicitation on behalf of society. It is therefore a mistake to speak of a retreat from parenthood if by that is meant a deliberate refusal to replace the present generation. Replacement is not and never has been a conscious matter. But with a system of voluntary parenthood it must become so if society is to survive. That is the first inference. I may now pass to the second.

When children were a tax which could not be escaped by those who desired home life, the community, which relied on this revenue for its perpetuation, was under no pressure to smooth the path for those who had to pay it. Whether the path was rough or smooth, children found their way in. Under a system of voluntary parenthood, however, the situation undergoes a profound change; the community now relies for its revenue upon voluntary contributions, and it must see, not

that obstacles do not stand in the path of contributors, but that all the resources of modern knowledge and skill are employed in order to assist those who take their share in the essential task of replacement.

While this metaphor of taxation and revenue does indicate one aspect of the matter, it may perhaps obscure another and very important aspect. Children are a pride and a pleasure and a necessary fulfilment of any normal life. But again, now that children are voluntary, the greater the pride in them and the higher the anticipations for them, the more hesitation there will be in producing them, if conditions are such that these very proper emotions are unlikely to find satisfaction and these very reasonable expectations unlikely to be realized. This implies that all the relevant conditions must be carefully examined and purposely modified where they are found to be antagonistic to the founding and building of families.

THE NEED FOR A SCIENTIFIC POPULATION POLICY

Any positive population policy must therefore have two objects: first, to make it universally understood that, with a system of voluntary parenthood, a community can only survive if participation in the task of replacement is undertaken as a normal social duty, and secondly, to remove obstacles to, and to create facilities for, the fulfilment of this duty.

It is perhaps less easy to understand the need for the second than for the first of these two points in the programme. It arises in this way. The circumstances surrounding marriage, the procreation and upbringing of children, raise medical, psychological, social and economic problems of the utmost complexity. As yet we have made hardly any attempt to examine and far less to solve them, because, under the conditions formerly prevailing, there was no pressure to do so. To give one example of what is meant, 90 per cent. of the population is remunerated by wage or salary. But neither wage nor salary bears any relation to size of family, and every child diminishes the income per head of the

family. This is a positive and serious obstacle to parenthood.

Though a striking example, this is only one of the many which could be given. If we examine the circumstances surrounding the setting up and equipment of homes, the construction of houses, the lay-out of towns, our transport facilities, the innumerable duties which face the mother with young children, how much evidence shall we find of thought and planning for the family? In addition to social and economic, there are medical and psychological situations and problems requiring attention. There has been research into birth-control, both medical and psychological, but next to none into birth promotion. There are birth-control clinics, but what help or advice, based upon adequate scientific foundation, is available for those who want to have children? The need for research and planning in all these directions is rendered more urgent by the fact that it is the unmarried and the childless who have money to spare. In consequence the ingenuity of inventors and the activity of entrepreneurs are largely exercised to fulfil the wants of such people. How much of the talents and enterprise of the commercial world is directed to them, and how little of modern knowledge and skill is called into the service of those who are seeking the best environment for children. We all know the attractive model flats, fitted out with every modern device, which appear at every housing exhibition, and in which no child could ever find a place; how often do we see in any such exhibition similar model day and night nurseries? Perhaps the organizers of such exhibitions know their public and realize that the inhabitants of the West End who flock to them would smile at the suggestion that anyone could so inconvenience themselves as to require to use rooms for such a purpose.

Upon reflection it becomes plain that the new situation demands a complete re-orientation of outlook, a thorough examination of all circumstances which bear upon parenthood and the formulation of carefully constructed proposals designed to assist parenthood. In many spheres it will be necessary to call upon expert knowledge and

specialized experience. No one society could undertake so huge a task.

TASK OF THE EUGENICS SOCIETY

How then could this *Society* proceed if it decided to construct a positive population policy? When we look round and take note of some contemporary activities, we find reason for thinking that the task is not so overwhelming as appears at first sight. Already many of the difficulties confronting parents, or those who would like to become parents, have been made the subjects of study by groups of people who are often organized into societies. Those who initiate or engage in these efforts have as yet seldom or never any views about the population situation. They have become aware of some aspect of our social organization which, whether it takes the shape of a positive obstacle or of a lack of facilities, creates a difficulty for parents. Thus we find a society engaged in the study of family endowment, and we find organizations devoted to the study of day nurseries, nursery schools, parent and teacher co-operation, child and vocational guidance, the position of married women in industry and the professions, the planning of houses and towns and other matters too numerous to mention. Any attempt to construct a positive population policy must draw upon the results of all these activities. What is required is that some organization, which has the whole population situation under review and desires to construct an adequate programme, should examine all the proposals made to deal with these difficulties, and weave them into a coherent population policy.

What organization is better fitted to undertake this work than the *Eugenics Society*? Its special interests are biological, and that means that it is primarily concerned with matters which are fundamental to the special interests of all these other organizations. Further, I have argued that the special interests of our *Society*, unlike those of these other societies, require it to give some attention to the whole population problem. It would take me too far afield to inquire in detail what form the activities of the *Society* might assume if it set out in this

direction. But in general it is clear that it would find points of contact with many organizations, the objects of which have hitherto seemed remote from eugenics. In developing these contacts it would make these organizations aware that a bond exists between them, and that the bond is an interest in the family and in family relationships. The task of the *Society* would be, in the first place, by dwelling on this fact, to co-ordinate their efforts, and in the second place, by bringing the population situation into view, to direct them to a common purpose.

Though I have selected this aspect of any population programme for some discussion before saying anything about the other, it is of the greatest importance to realize that it is subordinate and accessory to the other. The removal of obstacles to parenthood alone can never achieve the desired end; it is impossible to bribe people into parenthood, for it is impossible to throw the weight of material advantage into the scale of parenthood. And it is not merely that the removal of obstacles is insufficient by itself; it is that this objective and the promotion of the idea of parenthood as a social duty do not march in harmony. No method can be successful which couples an appeal to responsibility with material considerations. The appeal must be made first and independently; the smoothing of the path to parenthood should be undertaken merely to ensure that those who are already disposed to shoulder their responsibilities shall not be hampered by overwhelming and quite unnecessary difficulties. But this appeal is not to the performance of some harsh and stern duty; it merely endeavours to bring men to realize that the fulfilment of any normal life involves parenthood, and that it is only communities whose members so fulfil their lives which will survive—though this fulfilment does involve for the individual a sacrifice of short to long-run satisfactions, as do in fact all other achievements that are finally worth while.

PROSPECTS OF A SUCCESSFUL "APPEAL TO RESPONSIBILITY"

It would be possible to quote recent sayings which indicate the most profound

pessimism about the likelihood of the success of any such appeal. It has been said that the present trend of population shows that love of children and sense of responsibility for the future are not strong enough to ensure the perpetuation of the race. But before we can say that these or any other notions and sentiments are too weak to achieve any particular purpose, they must be given due opportunity to express themselves. Anyone surveying this country a few decades ago might well have concluded that the native senses of decency and self-respect were too weak to induce the mass of the people to wash. But that was at a time when little or no attempt had been made to connect cleanliness with self-respect, and when most people lacked the facilities for achieving cleanliness even if they desired it. The change of attitude to personal cleanliness, brought about by propaganda in the schools and elsewhere, coupled with greatly extended facilities for washing, have wrought a transformation in the habits of our people in the present century. A similar change of attitude and practice may well be achieved in the sphere now under discussion.

On the other hand it would be foolish to indulge in any facile optimism. Voluntary parenthood is the greatest innovation that the race has ever made. It may well be misused for a time ; a few centuries are as nothing in the history of the race, and the next few generations may perhaps see a dramatic decline in numbers. For many reasons such a decline is not to be desired ; unequal rates of population growth, and even more so diverse directions of population change, introduce an unsettling factor into international relations. Again it is by no means certain that declining populations would be left in peace and free to build themselves up once more. But, given the chance, the population would no doubt be built up again out of those with more than average considerations for others and endowed with the virtues which find their expression in the family circle and unpretentious lives.

This would be a gigantic eugenic purge of a kind for which there is something to be said, since in my opinion eugenicists have always

over-rated the importance of mere intelligence. In gatherings of persons busily devoted to plans for the radical transformation of society I have sometimes been surprised to observe how slender the chance is that any of them will be represented in the society for which they plan. It may be that west-enders and left-wingers alike are destined to disappear ; but further reflection does not suggest to me that their disappearance will be any great loss. A very eminent member of this *Society* once remarked that the Romans prided themselves upon being the degenerate descendants of gods, but that we pride ourselves upon being the very creditable descendants of apes. There may be truth in both views, and it may be that we retain an uncomfortable number of persons, some innately disposed to lordly dissipation, and others to the tiresome chatterings of busybodies.

A NEW POLICY FOR THE EUGENICS SOCIETY

Whether we take long or short views, voluntary parenthood occupies the centre of the field. So far as negative eugenics is concerned the inference that I have drawn from this fact is that parenthood must be made truly voluntary throughout society in the sense that all births must become wanted births, and I have argued that the only promising method of bringing this about in the near future is through research into contraception. It is to this, I suggest, that the energies of the *Society* should now be directed rather than to the movement for sterilization which is going forward by its own momentum, or to the arousing of a negative eugenic conscience. The latter may do more harm than good. Cases have come to my notice in which people, who would make the most desirable parents, have been frightened out of parenthood by some baseless apprehension that a defect is lurking in their strain. An appeal to the degrading sentiment of fear, whatever its immediate results, seldom or never produces desirable results in the end ; such appeals are only too common to-day, as for instance those made by well-meaning persons who would save us

from war or revolution. The cumulative effect which they produce upon current outlook tends to smother the natural buoyancy and resilience of men upon which alone we can rely to get us out of our present troubles.

It is precisely this mood of apprehension that a policy of positive eugenics would seek to dispel. Sir William Beveridge ended a recent broadcast talk by saying that the governments of the world may well find "that the possibility of preventing ultimate disappearance of their peoples depends upon the kind of world that they can make for people to live in."* If Sir William is thinking of such measures as I have suggested, I would of course agree. But some of his hearers may have concluded that the world must first be made safe and comfortable before men can be expected to continue to people it. I suggest that there is a circle here since confidence among the people at large alone can make the world peaceful and prosperous. It is not necessary to believe in progress or to nurse anticipations of a millenium in order to feel confidence in life and to experience joy in it. It is necessary only to return to a simpler and clearer conception than now prevails of the abiding human task.

Doubts, however, may arise in the mind of eugenists about the methods which in my opinion are alone likely to be effective in the field of positive eugenics. They may ask how, if a call to parenthood is made, they can be assured that it will not be heard by that section of the population which is least

well fitted for parenthood. The answer is that, if parenthood is truly voluntary and the appeal is made to unselfish motives, the response will come from just those people who are the most desirable as parents of the future. Effective voluntary parenthood is in fact the most promising condition upon which eugenic effort can be founded. They may also ask whether, if obstacles are removed from the path of parenthood, the less desirable section of the population may not be thereby encouraged to reproduce. The answer is that material inducements will achieve little or nothing by themselves; they will never be more than encouragements to those who are already disposed to parenthood. The two apparently opposed policies of promoting birth-control and of encouraging parenthood are therefore not incompatible. They can be pursued together, and unless they are pursued together the goal of eugenics cannot be reached.

What will the historian of the eugenic movement have to say when he comes to record this phase of its history? Will it be that early concentration upon negative policy had developed so myopic a vision that eugenists failed to observe the threat to normal people, and that when generous constructive enthusiasm was aroused to counter that threat, they failed to associate themselves with it, and passed out of sight with the gloomy sects of the time whose faces were turned more to death than to life? Or will it be that they seized their great opportunity, came forward, and gathered and directed the forces making for preservation?

* *The Listener*, February 6th, 1935, p. 226.

